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Washington, DC: Today, the House passed H.R. 800, the Employee Free Choice Act. Congressman Russ Carnahan voted to support this legislation, which will restore workers' rights to form unions and bargain.

In a time where middle-class workers are having a more difficult time making ends meet, unions offer a practical solution for workers hit by the middle class squeeze. This legislation would allow workers to join together to bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. On average, workers who belong to unions earn 30 percent more than non-union workers, and they are much more likely to have healthcare and pension benefits.

The current system for forming unions is broken. Workers who attempt to unionize routinely face intimidation, harassment, coercion, reassignment and job termination by their employers. A recent Center for Economic and Policy Research report found that as many as one in five union activists are fired for legal organizing activities. Moreover, many workers do not join unions for fear of repercussions; more than half of all U.S. workers say they would join a union right now if they could.

Under the Employee Free Choice Act, if a majority of employees in a workplace sign cards authorizing a union, they get a union. If every worker is able to freely and fairly make their own decision about whether to form a union, more workers can raise their standard of living by bargaining for better treatment on the job. The Act also initiates stronger penalties for violations of workers' rights. Specifically, the bill will require the National Labor Relations Board to request injunctions, increases backpay awards and provides civil penalties.

"I am proud to join the bipartisan group of my colleagues who are standing up to defend American workers. In my tenure in the House, I have consistently fought for hard working Americans, and passage of the Employee Free Choice Act is crucial to this fight."

-Congressman Russ Carnahan, MO-3